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AUTHOR	Gordon, Mary; Ludwig, Meredith
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ABSTRACT

This special report briefly presents information about innovative programs targeted toward at-risk youth in the United States that are provided by many institutional members of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU). Twelve model programs out of 250 were selected for the report. Among the issues the programs address are: health education; high school completion; mentoring; job training; early childhood education; faculty development and teacher training; parental involvement; and community partnerships. The twelve programs are listed with the program's name, institution, program description, and contact. In addition, the report discusses barriers to successful strategies that hinder program creation and provides AASCU recommendations and implications for a national policy designed to help at-risk youth. Finally, specific proposals are listed that are directed toward the President, the Congress, the Federal Government, state/local legislatures, business, and community organizations to determine a national agenda for influencing issues affecting high-risk youth. (GLR)

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Special Report

August 4, 1989

American Association of State Colleges and Universities

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Addressing the Problems of Youth: Public Four-Year Colleges Respond

A Project of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation

by Mary Gordon and Meredith Ludwig, AASCU

The AASCU Initiative

The dramatic issues of at-risk youth and the survival of our nation's young people have created astounding and tragic headlines as the decade of the 80s comes to its close. The dropout rates have increased tremendously along with the problems of drug abuse and distribution, teen pregnancy, juvenile crime, child neglect and abuse.

How does society cope with these problems? How do our communities grapple with these dilemmas? How do our schools and higher education institutions address these issues?

State colleges and universities play a dominant role in serving our nation's youth. AASCU-member institutions are important catalysts in expanding services to our nation's culturally diverse population. More important, many of these institutions have, for many years, responded to the critical problems their communities face in dealing with at-risk young people and have been in the forefront of developing and promoting programs for this specific group.

Member presidents and chancellors of AASCU's Committee on Urban Affairs, currently chaired by Chancellor Peggy Gordon Elliott, **Indiana University Northwest,** and previously chaired by Chancellor David Outcalt, **University of Wisconsin-Green Bay,** not only emphasized the importance of examining AASCU's institutional resources on this topic, but also set the direction for the project. The Urban Affairs Committee served as the advisory group for the proposal development and overall project.

In May, 1988 in its efforts to help at-risk youth, AASCU began a year-long project, funded by a grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, that included an analysis of its members' programs and resources targeted toward at-risk

youth: new immigrants, disadvantaged young people from inner cities and rural areas, migrant workers, and many others from a variety of sociological and cultural backgrounds. As a result, AASCU has compiled information on innovative programs of its many state colleges and universities. Information on these programs can be disseminated and shared with organizations and institutions that are interested in learning about AASCU institutional activities and resources.

Public Four-Year Colleges and Universities Respond

Descriptions submitted from approximately 250 programs from 95 AASCU state colleges and universities were reviewed in order to select 12 model programs relating to youth at-risk. These exemplary programs addressed health education, high school completion, mentoring, job training, early childhood education, faculty development and teacher training, parental involvement, community partnerships, and more.

- The major youth problems identified by the survey respondents are: drug abuse, teen pregnancy, dropping out, and the lack of educational skills.
- The proportion of programs with a focus on early education for disadvantaged youth and high school completion are approximately the same: 30 percent.
- Ten percent of the programs occur on a regular yearly basis; 33 percent are ongoing; and 38 percent are expected to last from 2-3 years.
- Fully 47 percent of the programs are able to use all instructional and meeting facilities at public colleges and universities for their activities.
- Two hundred and fifty-two faculty were identified among the respondents as working with these programs; the largest group (35 percent) are from the discipline of education.
- Eighty-three percent of the presidents and chancellors report involvement in cooperative efforts in their service areas.

A database of program characteristics from the survey respondents is being maintained as one component of the Office of Association Research's resources on member institutions.

The Washington Conference

A major activity of this project included an April 1989 Washington, DC national meeting of university administrators, community personnel, and representatives of public-service organizations. The project directors of AASCU's 12 model programs were

invited to meet with participants and share their unique expertise to assist AASCU in developing a series of policy recommendations on youth problems. President John Brownell, **California State University, Dominguez Hills**, and Chancellor Frederick Obear, **University of Tennessee at Chattanooga,** also participated in the program which included a dialogue on critical issues and practical principles for today's youth. Guest speakers included Mary Leonard from the Council on Foundations and Ann Young from the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Education, Arts and Humanities.

The overwhelming message from funders and legislators to the assembled participants was to approach problems through long-term projects, or develop long-term strategies with carefully defined evaluation criteria.

Mary Futrell, outgoing president, National Education Association, in her luncheon address, reinforced this theme.

"Perhaps the largest contribution that these institutions may make is to provide visibility and public awareness of the problems of youth. Such an effort would incorporate existing campus expertise and would seek to link public schools and service agencies interested in making an impact. Public colleges and universities should also pursue an active research agenda (which documents effective interventions) and seek avenues through established linkages to translate findings into action."

—survey response from President Clifford M. Trump, Black Hills State College (SD)

Twelve Model Institutional Programs

According to survey results, over 250 programs and activities involving at-risk youth are operated directly by AASCU institutions or are in collaborative partnerships with AASCU institutions. Program areas include activities for high school completion, health education, parental involvement education, mentoring, leadership development, job training, early education, faculty development, and teacher training.

■ **PALS Project**

Northern Arizona University—The PALS Lab (Principles of Alphabet Literacy System), is a partnership to improve the literacy levels of court-identified juveniles. *Contact:* Andrea Anderson, Center for Excellence in Education, PO Box 5774, Flagstaff, AZ 86001; 602/523-2611.

■ **Future Teacher Institute**

California State University, Dominguez Hills—FTI had 58 minority junior and high school students in a program introducing them to the "classroom of the future." *Contact:* Judson Taylor, Dean, Center for Quality Education, 1000 East Victoria Street, Carson, CA 90747; 213/516-3519.

■ **Alliance for Youth**

Central Connecticut State University—Established to offer short-term projects designed to enrich the academic environment in the community's schools. *Contact:* George Clarke, Dean, School of Arts and Sciences, 1615 Stanley Street, New Britain, CT 06050; 203/827-7215.

■ **SCIPPE**

Indiana University Northwest—The Steering Committee for Improved Participation in Postsecondary Education (SCIPPE), a coalition to improve the college participation and success rates of high school graduates. *Contact:* Bill Lee, Director of Admissions, 3400 Broadway, Gary, IN 46408; 219/980-6821.

■ **The Center for the Study of Juvenile Delinquency Prevention and Intervention**

Jackson State University (MS)—The center assists agencies in working with behaviorally nonconforming or at-risk youth. *Contact:* Jimmy Bell, 1400 Lynch Street, Jackson, MS 39217; 601/968-2230.

■ **Great Potential**

State University of New York at Purchase—The SUNY Westchester School Partnership's goals are to share resources, develop programs, and identify successful approaches to significant education problems. *Contact:* Sheila Drummond-Hughes, SUNY Purchase, Westchester Schools Partnership, 735 Anderson Hill Road, Purchase, NY 10577; 914/253-5154.

■ **Strive Toward Excellence Program**

University of Akron (OH)—The Firestone Fellows Strive Toward Excellence Program (STEP) is a pre-college program to assist students wishing to attend college. *Contact:* Deborah G. Stone, Coordinator, Gallucci Hall, Room 109 University of Akron, Akron, OH 44325-7908; 216/375-6819.

■ **E. J. Brown Elementary School Project**

Wright State University (OH)—A collaboration between the Dayton Public Schools and Wright State University, the elementary school offers a program for a multi-age, continuous-progress education. *Contact:* William Gordon, College of Education and Human Services, Wright State University, Dayton, OH 45435; 513/873-3411.

■ **The Winthrop College Child Abuse Prevention Program**

Winthrop College (SC)—This program assists districts with curricula, films, in-service programs, after-school talk lines, and stronger inter-agency communication. *Contact:* Susan Smith, Project Director, School of Education, Winthrop College, 134 Withers Building, Rock Hill, SC, 29733; 803/323-2151.

■ **Memphis Partners, Inc.**

Memphis State University (TN)—Memphis Partners is a nonprofit organization designed to help solve the major problem of youth unemployment. *Contact:* Jeanne Dreifus, Division of Social Work, Memphis State University, Memphis, TN 38152; 901/678-2642.

■ **Career Beginnings**

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga—Career Beginnings is designed to help at-risk high school students to overcome difficulties and to achieve their postsecondary goals. *Contact:* Gail Lindberg, Career Education Center, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, 615 McCallie Avenue, Chattanooga, TN 37403-2598; 615/755-4475.

■ **Youth Opportunities Unlimited**

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board—Y.O.U. is a work-study program for at-risk junior high and high school students. Counselors and teachers recommmend students for sponsorship by local Private Industry Councils. *Contact:* Daisy Diaz-Alemany, Y.O.U. State Director, 150 East Riverside, Suite 402, Austin, TX 78704; 512/462-6409.

"I believe it is time to introduce a 'new professor' who is in touch with the realities of the public school and who is skilled in helping teaching progress through an experiential, developmental, competency-based training program. It is important that we establish closer, more focused, and more intense partnerships between the universities which prepare teachers and the school districts which hire teachers. Teacher preparation will never become relevant until it addresses the problems of at-risk learners."
—survey response from Eugene Hughes, president, Northern Arizona University

Barriers to Success

Model program directors from AASCU institutions and representatives of national public-service organizations indicate that development of successful strategies means that we must examine and diminish the existing barriers that hinder program creation. Those barriers include:

Public Awareness. Problems of youth are not at the top of the public's agenda and the field has lacked a comprehensive approach. Fragmentation of programs leads to confusion in the public's mind and lack of a central clearinghouse limits the problems to low public awareness.

Infrastructure of Social and Education Agencies. The absence of a natural communication structure results in a layering of personnel and approaches. Drawbacks include omitting teachers, social workers, etc. as consultants to intervention. When agencies lack consensus, the problems of youth are neglected or identified too late.

Parent and Family Demographics. Children exist today in a more complicated environment, with changes in family structure, mobility and economics. A lack of sensitivity to children and a view of them as a powerless group hinder problem solving. Parents of children who are not in difficulty are not seen as potential resources.

Attitudes. Even youth at-risk should not be analyzed by a deficit model. There is a lack of effort to empower young people and require them to give back to society.

Higher Education Institutions and Relationships with Communities. There is a stigma regarding the involvement of a higher education institution in a community problem; involvements are experimental and do not include long-term commitments. Communities have not been involved in developing strategies.

Faculty Reward Structure. The absence of a regard for faculty members as contributors to solutions to social problems is a chief barrier to stimulating and sustaining faculty participation in projects. Reward structures, tenure tracks, lack of leadership from administrators, and community views of faculty as experimenters are hindrances.

Employment and Economic Factors. Confusion exists regarding work place needs of the future, including level of education needed by workers and the role of technology in the work place.

Cultural Issues. Inability and insensitivity plague efforts to communicate about cultural differences in education, the family, work and health care, and in serving the needs of youth.

Funding Priorities of Interested Parties. The narrowness of vision due to the lack of a comprehensive approach and the desire for quick results, or lack of sustained financial support, are barriers established by funding agencies, such as those in the federal government.

Technological Advances. While these forces could assist programs in reaching more youth and speed problem-solving approaches, technology seems to be left out of programs as a tool and is seen as a threat to youth in the work place.

Although many higher education institutions and community agencies do offer programs, resources and funds addressing youth problems, more comprehensive approaches are necessary to make any headway on a national level. Institutions and public-serviceprojects are to be commended for the programs they have established.

AASCU's Recommendations and Implications for National Policy

■ **How can we in higher education more positively affect public perceptions and increase awareness about our programs on a regional and national level?—1.** Involve practitioners and industry in the planning from the beginning. **2.** Establish a leadership awards program for presidents who demonstrate commitment to at-risk youth projects. **3.** Develop an underlying research base to inform practitioners, avoid duplication of effort, and change systems. **4.** Utilize the media more effectively to publicize: (a) award programs where projects can compete and gain public attention; (b) national conferences where project results can be disseminated. Existing clearinghouses should address the growing literature in this field.

■ **How can funding for other programs be enhanced?**—By working on criteria by which a project can be evaluated for success and by working with funding agencies to lengthen the time for funding demonstration projects.

■ **What can we do to develop significant resources to approach the problems of youth at risk?—1.** Establish technical assistance to replicate programs that work. **2.** Allow ideas to originate with local agencies and then support them with institutional resources. **3.** Broaden program perspectives, making them longer in term. The same youth groups should not be targeted repeatedly. **4.** Provide information resources at the youths' levels and within their reach. This includes using peers and parents who are not at-risk. **5.** Explore the media as resources.

■ **How can universities and coalitions better prepare and involve teachers and faculty in at-risk youth programs?—1.** Train a cadre of teachers of at-risk youth, with instruction in health, family, cultural and learning issues. **2.** Try a new twist on exchange programs; bring high school and other teachers, school and community personnel to the higher education institution to teach and consult with faculty. **3.** Raise the public's concern about the salary and working of human services personnel in order to support better pay and to attract the best. **4.** Specifically assign staff persons in schools to track a child. So many young people are lost in the system without an adult buddy.

■ **Consider the roles parents play in the problems and solutions.—1.** Schools need to structure parent time

for parents' schedules. Meetings could be held early in the morning, babysitting could be provided for younger siblings and consistent summer school programs could be offered. **2.** Use parents without serious problems to support parents with them. **3.** Think about parental responsibility (and liability) for youth crimes.

■ **What can be pursued to achieve successful programs for youth at-risk?—1.** Improve the status and salary of teachers; increase numbers of school specialists and allow them to do their jobs. **2.** Create strong parenting programs; schools need to keep parents involved. **3.** Develop holistic approaches to help youth problems with a focus on building self esteem. **4.** Rediscover community resources. **5.** Adopt a broader definition of at-risk to include latchkey children. **6.** Establish a comprehensive, long view from preschool to after-school for all ages. **7.** Use testing and remedial services carefully and wisely.

■ **Will the same set of problems exist in the future, or will a new set of problems arise?—1.** Problems will be more severe perhaps requiring a reorganization of schools, a change in administering programs, different approaches for teacher preparation, better use of television and other technology. **2.** With the apparent increase of children with AIDS in schools, staff will require special training, and more staff such as health care personnel and counselors will be needed. **3.** Resources exist that we currently do not use. We need to develop new incentives for nontraditional groups to become teachers and community workers, such as retired armed services personnel and college-ready high school students.

■ **How can youth become better prepared to become tomorrow's leaders?—1.** In large high schools, faculty can provide leadership experience for a diverse student group; break them into smaller interest groups to engage in more opportunities, and involve business representatives in leadership programs. **2.** By working toward improving students' attitudes about the value of academic achievement so that it becomes prevalent.

AASCU Proposals

1. Nationally, we in the higher education arena need to reframe the issues for political leaders and endorse legislative initiatives that attempt to solve youth problems. Additionally, the higher education arena must look outside education for spokespersons on the issues of at-risk youth, and actively engage other sectors as advocates for education. **2.** We must establish a Trust Fund for Children with a dedicated tax to fund programs specifically for children. **3.** State and local policies can affect service scholarships for students performing service activities. Support for nontraditional structuring of schools and their partnerships would engage the most fruitful points of intervention. **4.** State and local media campaigns are critical to stimulating interest between industry and individuals in collaborative projects. **5.** State funding formulas should reflect flexibility permitting institutions to experiment with nontraditional education programs. **6.** Federal legislative efforts to appropriate demonstration project money should be marked by a comprehensive approach allowing for multiple-year funding in order to accurately determine what works. **7.** Federal funding guidelines should correspond to the school year, for budgeting reasons. **8.** The American Association of State Colleges and Universities should be involved in the review of federal and state regulations and the review of research priorities. **9.** There should be an effort to concentrate on the reward structures for faculty in higher education. Faculty should be required to serve in the community and should work as mentors in the schools and be rewarded for doing so. To leaders in higher education, AASCU recommends that a project be sponsored to examine ways to reconfigure the faculty reward structure. Significant points to consider: reward and requirement for service, junior faculty protection for their involvement in creating risky and innovative projects; a redefining of some faculty as clinical with efforts geared toward practical results. The evaluation and writing required of such faculty projects would serve as evidence of their contributions for tenure review. **10.** There should be a national conference on at-risk youth inviting the leaders of major policy-making organizations to raise the issue as a priority for their agendas. Mutal concerns can be identified and the knowledge base can be concentrated. Commitments can be gained for further organizational participation in future projects and public relations efforts pertaining to at-risk youth.

State colleges and universities recommend the above proposals to the president, Congress, the federal government, state/local legislatures, business, and community organizations to determine a national agenda for influencing issues affecting youth at-risk.

After examining the issues and exploring the successes of programs and activities that are using effective and creative strategies, AASCU commends the administrators and organizations that are attempting to solve the critical problems faced by high-risk young people, their families, and their communities. In order to arrive at real solutions to these problems and to focus more clearly on maximizing our human resource potential, AASCU recommends continued funding and support for these programs and a national focus on building more comprehensive approaches to addressing the problems facing at-risk youth.

"Each moment that we ask our at-risk students to wait for relief, to wait for help, to wait for the day when every educational institution and every community is responsive to their academic and emotional needs, another child drifts toward despair . . . another child falls through the cracks . . . another child drops out of school and drops into the dark underbelly of American life."

—Mary Hatwood Futrell, outgoing president, National Education Association, speaking at AASCU's At-Risk Youth Conference, April 1989.

The writers gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Gwen Kaebnick and Louis Barsi of AASCU for their contributions to this report. For more information on AASCU's programs on at-risk youth and complete descriptions of the AASCU model programs, contact Mary Gordon at AASCU, 202/293-7070.

END

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